



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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MASTERMIND OF MAIL THEFT AND COUNTERFEITING RING RECEIVES 63 MONTHS OF IMPRISONMENT

PHOENIX, ARIZONA -- The United States Attorney's Office for the District of Arizona announced that on June 2, 2003, JUAN ANTONIO ROMERO, D.O.B. 8-14-63, of Avondale, Arizona, was sentenced to 63 months imprisonment by United States District Judge Frederick J. Martone. ROMERO was found guilty by jury on January 23, 2003, of conspiracy to steal mail; conspiracy to possess of stolen mail; counterfeiting and uttering counterfeit securities; and possessing implements to counterfeit securities.

In imposing the sentence Judge Martone found that ROMERO was indeed the "mastermind" and "key participant" of the conspiracy. He also noted that ROMERO's criminal record with repeated probation or parole violations made it apparent that the best way to protect the public was to incarcerate ROMERO for the maximum time permitted.

The evidence at trial showed that ROMERO recruited a group of 10 other West Valley residents to systematically steal mail in order to get checks and financial information during a period from May 2001 to late November 2001. They would then alter and forge personal checks, making them payable to members

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of the group so they could be negotiated. They also took bank information from business checks and created computer generated counterfeit checks which they also cashed. The evidence also showed they used customer service phone numbers to effect telephonic transfers of funds and telephonic purchases using the stolen information.

Nine other co-defendants plead guilty prior to trial. One absconded from Pretrial Release, but has since been captured and awaits trial.

The investigation leading to the conviction and sentence was conducted by the United States Postal Inspection Service, the Avondale Police Department, the Goodyear Police Department, and the Phoenix Police Department.

The prosecution was handled by Daniel R. Drake, Assistant United States Attorney, District of Arizona, Phoenix, Arizona.

CASE NUMBER: CR-01-1144-PHX-FJM
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